For Evander's Sake

by Skylark

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For Evander's Sake

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SUMMARY: This story takes place right after the series finale "A Full Circle". For Evander's sake, Hercules must learn to forgive his father Zeus. With the help of Iolaus, Hercules tries to come to terms with the loss of his family and Zeus' role in his life.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Other titles for this story were: Forgiveness, or Missing Scene from A Full Circle. It was hard to find a title for this story. I chose For Evander's Sake because I believe it was for Evander's sake that Hercules made the effort to try to let go of his past and forgive his father for the sins of the past.

CHAPTER 1

"Uncle Herc..I so look forward to visiting Olympus. I so much want to meet Aphrodite, Artemis, and I can't wait to see Zeus and Hera again....Mother says that Zeus gives these dinners every year! I love Grandpa Zeus and Grandma Hera very much... piped an enthusiastic Evander.

"Yes, Evander, I'm glad you're so happy to visit Olympus" answered Hercules in a monotone unenthusiastic voice.."Now Evander, go along with your mother..I think it's suppertime.." Hercules then walks down the road so that no one could see the angry scowl on Hercules' face. Just thinking about Zeus and Hera still made Hercules angry. Hercules

did not want Evander to sense his anger or his disappointment in Zeus, his father. Hercules watches as Iolaus and Evander talk. Hercules knew in his heart that he was going to have to forgive Zeus one way or another for Evander's sake.

Evander had many powers. Whatever Evander imagines would materialize. Both Hercules and Iolaus wanted to make sure that Evander grew up learning how to use his powers responsibly. The purple monster incident was one such example. However, Evander's powers also allowed him to feel empathetically what others were feeling.

"Uncle Iolaus..why is Hercules sad? Why doesn't he want to see Zeus? I can feel the anger and sadness in his heart whenever I talk about Grandpa Zeus..queried a overly curious Evander.

"Evander, your Uncle Hercules loves his father Zeus very much..you know that don't you Evander, can you feel the love that Uncle Hercules feels for Zeus? Concentrate on that. Don't worry about the rest. I'll take care of it. Okay Evander? says Iolaus

Evander closes his eyes and concentrates on Uncle Hercules feelings. "Oh Uncle Iolaus, I can feel Uncle Hercules' love for Zeus..it's like no matter what Zeus does..Uncle Hercules will always love his father..Uncle Hercules loves Zeus because..." Evander hesitates as he concentrates on Hercules..his little brows furrowing in the effort. Iolaus thinks how much Evander resembles Hercules that whenever Hercules needed to concentrate on a hard drill at the academy, Hercules would also furrow his brow...

"Uncle Hercules loves Zeus because..Zeus is his father..I can sense Uncle Hercule's sense of duty and loyalty to his father...says Evander looking expectantly at Iolaus kind blue eyes. Evander thinks that Hercules is lucky to have such a good friend. Evander could sense Iolaus' brave, generous and forgiving heart. Evander knew that Iolaus could help Uncle Hercules forgive Zeus....

"Listen to me, Evander, I know that you can sense alot of emotions that you don't understand..just concentrate on the positive feelings for now..I promise you I'll take care of Hercules' heart...continues Iolaus...

"I have faith in you, Uncle Iolaus, you are the Guardian of the Light..I know that you can fix the sadness I sense in Hercules' heart..because you can fix anything" says Evander as the little five year old boy gives his Uncle Iolaus a great big bear hug. "You should also know that out of all the people in the world, Hercules trusts you the most..if anyone can fix Hercules' broken heart...it's you..Uncle Iolaus.."

Nemesis walks out of the kitchen to see why her son Evander had not yet come home. She sees Iolaus and Evander talking in the yard. She thinks it must be a serious conversation for Evander to forget dinner.

Nemesis decides to call out to her son "Evander, it's dinnertime! Oh and you can bring Uncle Iolaus as well! I know I won't have any leftovers tonight! Come boys, it's dinner time!"

Suddenly Evander can smell the aroma of roasted rabbit and other dishes wafting through the air. Evander's little stomach grumbles. He

could sense his mother's worry as to why he had not yet come in for dinner.."Uncle Iolaus..I'd better go..Mother is starting to worry and she has dinner ready..You and Uncle Herc want to come for dinner..besides Uncle Iolaus I can sense YOUR hunger!' says Evander mischeviously.

Iolaus blushes as he realizes the depth of this boy's powers for Iolaus had not even realized just how loudly his stomach had been growling and just how delicious the aroma of garlic and other seasonings that were wafting in the evening air outside Nemesis' kitchen window. Evander runs to the house but turns around briefly towards Iolaus and says "I know you will keep your promise to help Uncle Hercules.." then Evander ran towards the house to eat dinner.

Hercules also smells dinner cooking and decides to walk back towards the house. He notices that Evander has finished his conversation with Iolaus...so he approaches Iolaus and pats his best friend on the back. Only hearing the last half of Evander's conversation with Iolaus, Hercules teases "So, what promise did you give to Evander..to help Uncle Hercules"

Once again, Iolaus blushed as he realized that Hercules might have overheard what Evander and he had been talking about so Iolaus explains to Hercules his conversation with Evander "Evander is worried about you, Hercules. He doesn't understand why you are angry at Zeus and he senses your sadness and anger whenever you talk about Zeus and especially about Hera.."

"You know, Iolaus, I want Evander to be happy..I know that Zeus has changed..I know that even Hera has forgiven Zeus for his indiscretions..and for Evander's sake..she's even given up tormenting me..I had hoped that Evander would not sense my sadness and anger which is why I walked away from you and Evander earlier..continued a brooding Hercules...

"Hercules, for Evander's sake, you have to forgive Zeus..he's your father..Evander looks up to you as a role model..if he can see that you can forgive Zeus despite everything..then Evander will learn..forgiveness..and unconditional love..Hercules for Evander's sake, try to forgive Zeus..pleaded Iolaus.

"Forgive Zeus? thundered Hercules "You know what he has done..WHERE WAS HE WHEN I NEEDED HIM? He wasn't there for Deianndra or for Ilea or any of my kids when Hera's fireballs burned them to death....

"Well..you know like I said before..Zeus is not perfect..he makes mistakes like everyone else..continues Iolaus

"You're defending Zeus?..He's King of the Gods..yet how many times has Aries or Discord threatened my life or your life? and WHERE WAS ZEUS? thundered Hercules

"What about my childhood? WHERE WAS HE? I grew up never knowing what he looked like..I remember dreaming about my father..I even blamed myself..I thought I was a bad boy and that's why he wouldn't visit me! exclaimed an irritated Hercules "WHERE WAS HE when Mother died? Zeus didn't even bother to come to her funeral! Just how do you expect me to forgive Zeus?

Then he takes Evander and releases Hera from the Abyss..he risks Evander's life and it's not the first time that Zeus has used an innocent so that he can have his way..My father is a selfish bastard who thinks of nothing but himself..so what if he was lonely..that's no excuse for endangering Evander..Zeus knows how dangerous Hera is..What kind of "father" is he? and You expect me to FORGIVE him? says Hercules incredulously.

Without stopping Hercules in his anger continues "Did Zeus ever think for once what the consequences of his actions are? Did he ever think of someone else besides himself? Does he ever care about others beside himself? Gods or mortals? continued Hercules.."I sometimes wonder if Zeus is even capable of love!

"Hercules, continues Iolaus patiently.."You know that Zeus has always loved you. He is proud of you otherwise Aries would not have been so jealous of you...do you remember the first time we both saw Aries at the Academy? Do you remember what Aries said?

"Yeah, I remember..Aries said "I want to kill you Hercules..for until you were born..I was the favorite son of Zeus..now all Zeus can talk about is his "precious" Hercules..it's always Hercules this or Hercules that..I'll find a way to get rid of you brother dearest..count on it!" and then Aries disappeared. I remember that was the first time I had ever met my half-brother Aries..." How can I forget Aries..? or any of my other "godly" relatives who has made my life a living nightmare! Do you remember how many times Aries attacked the Academy? Did Zeus intervene even once to save the cadettes? Did Zeus intervene when Discord, Strife or Daimos tried to kill you or I? "

"For one thing, Zeus loves you. He loves you so much that Aries was driven by jealousy to attack the Academy. Aries' exact words were"that you Hercules were his favorite son" protested Iolaus...

"Well, Iolaus if Zeus loved me..he sure had a funny way of showing it considering I never saw Zeus once during my childhood..you know as much as I do how that pained me..I had to find out from a fuming jealous Aries that I was Zeus' favorite! Some father Zeus turned out to be said Hercules sarcastically.

"You know Herc, sarcasm just doesn't suit you. You know as well as I do that Zeus loves you very much..if it weren't for Zeus you wouldn't be alive! How many times has Aries shot those electric bolts at you and how many times has Zeus' protection order saved your life? Zeus loves you or he wouldn't have given such a protection order for you! said Iolaus.

Suddenly the air around Hercules and Iolaus started to turn electric. A brilliant blue flash of light and Aries appeared in front of Hercules and Iolaus.

"You know, little brother, the runt is right. Old Zeus does love you. You are still his favorite well next to Evander of course..you're probably wondering why I'm here so before you begin your bellowing..let me set something straight..I love Evander very much but Zeus does not want me near him. Zeus seems to think that YOU would be the better father for Evander..so you see dear brother..Zeus

is still playing favorites..YOU are his favorite son..YOU get to raise MY son..so of course Zeus loves you..since my son is so bright..if you are sad so is he..so I have come here for Evander's sake..it would make my son, Evander, happy if you listen to the runt and forgive Zeus! explained Aries.

Another blue flash of light and Aphrodite appears with more or less the same message. "Little bro, listen to Sweetcheeks..he's right you know..I mean even old horse-faced Hera has forgiven Zeus..so if old horse-faced Hera can forgive Zeus why can't you? Don't let old horse-faced Hera be the better person! pouted Aphrodite.."Besides LOVE is always the way to go! bro!

Iolaus looked up at Aphrodite and winked before continuing "Herc, it's time to let go of the past..and forgive Zeus..pleaded Iolaus...

"If I forgive Zeus..that means I have to forgive Hera as well..it's not that easy Iolaus..I mean if I forgive Zeus..it's like forgiving Hera for killing my wife and children..it's not so easy Iolaus to let go of the past..I still miss Deianndra..my children..and then there's Serena..Iolaus..you have no idea what you're asking"

"I have no idea what I'm asking! " exclaimed Iolaus incredulously "You're not the only one who lost his family to Hera or the whim of the Gods..I lost Anya..my son Telemachus..I lost the chance to truly bond with MY father because he was a follower of Aries...Hercules..how can you say such a thing!" Iolaus blanched in indignation beneath his tan...Tears ran down Iolaus' face as he remembered the deaths of his wife Anya and his children...

Seeing Iolaus' tears..Hercules grabbed Iolaus into one of his crushing bear hugs and apologized "I'm sorry Iolaus..I lost my head..you know my temper..I..if it weren't for you..I would have continued to smash all of Hera's temples to kingdom come..I..I.."

Iolaus extricated himself from Hercules fierce bear hugs "Herc..I need to breathe" says Iolaus..Hercules loosened his grip "Sorry Iolaus..I..."

Evander watches from the kitchen window the conversation going on between Iolaus and Hercules. He senses all their emotions. He has no understanding of any of it. He has faith that Iolaus will help Hercules through his pain....most of all..he senses Hercules love for Zeus...

Iolaus sits down on a boulder. Iolaus wipes his unruly curly blond hair from his forehead, takes a deep breath before starting his lecture "Hercules, if I can forgive Skouras..Gods know what a terrible father he was..surely you can forgive Zeus...at least Zeus never hit you..abused you..called you names...left you hungry..made you feel small and insignificant...gave you bruises and broken bones...and yet Hercules, I still loved Skouras..I loved him enough to overlook his shortcomings...

"Yeah, I remember your bruises..when I was little you told me that you had fallen on something..I actually believed you..I thought you were the most accident-prone kid in the village...although I started getting suspicious when you started showing up with broken bones...I

remember how ashamed you were of some of the things Skouras did to you..yet you still forgave him..I don't know if I have a generous or forgiving a heart as you Iolaus..I don't know if I can be as big as you and forgive Zeus the way you have forgiven Skouras..continued Hercules uncertainly...

"Hercules, take it from someone who's been there..letting go of the past..of Skouras was the most liberating thing I'd ever done..I used to think of my father as some kind of monster..whenever he came home..he bought fear into our house..but when I saw him there in the Underworld..he just looked like a tired old man..once I stopped seeing my father as a monster but as a human being with flaws like anyone else..I stopped resenting him..I was able to forgive him..I understood that in his own way he loved me..that the beating was his way of making me into his tough soldier...Herc, you have to get past seeing Zeus as the negligent father..irresponsible King of the Gods..just see him as a human being with flaws..only then can you forgive him...pleaded Iolaus...

"You know Iolaus, I only started to look at Zeus differently..do you remember when we went to the Academy how I used to look up to Zeus..I remember how curious I was to get to know Zeus..mused Hercules "I mean when Zeus saved Evander's life..I started thinking about him like I did when I was a kid..for just a moment, Iolaus, I was able to forget the past..and that moment when he bought Evander back to life..in that moment when I was so grateful to my father to bringing Evander back..I think I forgave him..just for a moment..I was so relieved that Evander was alive again and that Evander would live to grow up to be a kind and compassionate God..because that's what Olympus needs..Olympus does not need any more Aries or Discord type Gods..Evander is the future of Olympus and Zeus knew that..." As Hercules spoke, he unconsiously wiped his hand through his chestnut hair as his azure eyes filled with emotions of pain, gratitude and love as he spoke of Zeus.

"Herc, I know the pain that both Hera and Zeus has put you through..I died 4 times..but Zeus did save my life once..remember he did turn back time so that I never died..Herc..try to remember the good things..don't dwell on the bad..forgive Zeus..if not for you..do it for Evander..forgive Zeus for Evander's sake" continued Iolaus his blue cerulean eyes pleading with Hercules' azure eyes..."Talk with Zeus..tell him how you feel..do this for Evander..please Hercules..you owe Evander this much"

Aries and Aphrodite watched this conversation with interest. Aries intervened saying "Evander can feel whatever you feel Hercules, if you are still feeling anger toward Zeus Evander will know and then someday my son is going to want to know why..my son looks up to you Hercules..since I can't be his father..then it's up to you, Hercules to set an example for Evander..for my son's sake, please Hercules go talk to Zeus..."

Hercules looked first at Aries, then at Aphrodite and then finally at Iolaus. He thought about Evander and about the upcoming dinner on Olympus. Hercules knew that he could not keep his feelings about Zeus masked from Evander's telepathic powers. He remembered what Sin had said when she was trying to tempt him into hell "Hercules, you have anger in your heart..I can feel it.." then Sin taking the appearance of Serena had breathed an evil spirit into Hercules in his effort to capture Xerxes. It was his anger towards both Xerxes and Zeus which

fueled his hatred. No, he didn't want Evander to feel that dark side of his soul. He decided right then and there to talk to Zeus to rid himself of the dark anger in his heart, for Evander's sake.

"Alright, I'll go to Olympus right now to talk to Zeus..for Evander's sake" concluded Hercules. Evander watched Hercules walk away with that familiar brooding expression on his face. Evander feels the pain and sadness in Hercules' heart. Evander wishes it was within his power to erase that pain from Hercules' heart. Tears of empathy roll down Evander's face as he experiences Hercules' grief. Just at that moment, Iolaus walks in the kitchen to eat his dinner.

"Hey Evander..what's with the waterworks? asks Iolaus as he bends over to wipe away Evander's tears...

"Oh, Iolaus, I was crying because I felt Hercules' pain..he feels so sad..he misses his wife and children..I now know it's because he somehow blames Zeus..I don't understand why he blames Zeus..I just know he does..he also blames Hera..it breaks my heart to see Uncle Hercules so sad..I just wish there was something I could do.." as Evander starts crying earnestly into Iolaus' shoulder.

"Don't cry Evander!..I kept my promise..Hercules is going to Olympus now to talk to Zeus..I think he will forgive Zeus...Hercules has a strong and forgiving heart and you of all people should know that since you can actually feel what Hercules feels..don't worry when Uncle Herc comes back from Olympus to take you to the family dinner..he will no longer be sad..you see forgiveness brings peace to the heart..I know...I forgave my father and so will Herc..." said Iolaus softly.

"Thank you Uncle Iolaus..you really are at peace..I can feel your heart..I feel that it wasn't easy for you to forgive your father..your father gave you so much pain..now I feel you are happy..I love you Uncle Iolaus...with all my heart" as Evander hugs Iolaus. Iolaus' cerulean blue eyes lit up with mischief as he tickled Evander. In the next room, Nemesis could hear the two boys roughousing in the next room. She was glad that Evander had Iolaus in his life. She was glad she listened to Hercules and did not kill Iolaus while she was Hera's Enforcer. She watched as Iolaus tackled Evander and tickled Evander all over until Evander used his powers to tackle and tickle a surprised Iolaus back .Iolaus' giggle could be heard reverberating all over the house...

CHAPTER 2

On Olympus, Zeus and Hera are preparing for the annual family dinner. Hercules approaches Zeus and Hera with misgivings in his heart. Even from Olympus, Hercules can feel Evander's love for him. I will forgive Zeus..for Evander..for me...

Surprised Zeus sees a puzzled Hercules enter Olympus. Hercules walks toward Zeus' throne. Hera leaves the room in order to give Zeus and Hercules some privacy. Hera already knows what the conversation would be about--forgiveness. Already, Hera has forgiven her foolish husband for his indiscretion with Alchemene. Now, it's about time that Hercules forgives Zeus as well.

"Hello Father" says Hercules " I suppose you're wondering why I'm

here...I came here because of Evander..in part to thank you and to thank Hera for saving Evander's life"

"Hercules, there's no need for you to go any further. Aries and Aphrodite have both talked to me..I know why you are here..I have not been a very good father to you Hercules..and I am sorry..I am sorry I wasn't there for you when you needed me..I am sorry I didn't intervene when I should have..I did care about Deianndra and the grandchildren....I do agree though we need to clear the air before Evander makes his first visit to Olympus...says Zeus...

"Hercules, let me tell you...that despite what you must think of me..I have always loved you. I loved your mother..it has taken all this time for Hera to forgive me for that transgression..yet out of that transgression came my greatest gift..YOU, Hercules..I stayed away from you during your childhood for your own good. I know that I am a terrible father..look at the sons I've raised..Aries..spoiled..Apollo...vain..I knew it would be a mistake to play a major role in your upbringing so I let Alchemene raise you..I figured she would do a better job than I..I had seen how she had raised Iphicles..I knew if there could be at least one compassionate God on Olympus then Olympus would have a future..explained Zeus.

"I have always watched your life from afar. When you became a full God momentarily I showed up my console room where I have been able to watch over every moment of your life..I made sure that Aries' electric bolts would not hurt you..I am sorry at how many times he has made your life a living nightmare..I am sorry at how many times Hera has tormented you and Iolaus..as you can see, son, I admit to you, I am a terrible father..please forgive me...finished Zeus.

"Father, when I was little I used to dream about you. I wondered what you looked like. I wanted so much for you to love me. Why couldn't you have come at least once to tell me that you loved me? Why did you let me wonder? A good father would not neglect his children in that manner. A good father tucks his children in at night; tends to his children when they are sick; laughs with his children on fishing trips; and tells his children daily how much he loves them. Being a father is more than just watching your children play..it's actually participating in it..do you have any idea how much pain you caused me simply by NOT BEING THERE? said Hercules with tears in his eyes.

"When I was accepted into the Academy, I thought to myself..now I can prove to my father that I am a worthy warrior..a worthy hero..I thought the reason you didn't show yourself was because I wasn't worthy of your love..I spent my childhood envious of the other boys who had nice caring fathers..I would watch these fathers teach their sons everything from hunting..to fishing..to swimming..do you know how many pitying stares I got from other villagers simply because I didn't have a father to show me around? Do you know how I felt to come home having someone else's father teach me what YOU should have taught me? Do YOU KNOW how it feels to be left out?

As a youth, I would have given anything to have you in my life..do you know how many times I risked my life and the lives of my classmates just so that I could meet you? Well do you?

"Hercules, believe me when I tell you that I had no idea that you felt this way..I had no idea how much you needed me..I was so convinced that you would be happier without me..that you would have a better childhood without me..I didn't want you to end up spoiled and vain like Apollo or like Aries or flighty like Aphrodite...I wanted a better future for you, son...believe me when I say that I've always had your best interest at heart...finished Zeus.

"Father, I don't care about your other children..don't you understand..I would have loved you even if you were the ugliest creature on earth..you're my father..I would have moved heaven and earth to just have had a father in my life...you have no understanding do you if what it is to be a father? says Hercules..."When Hera sent those fireballs and killed Deianndra and the children..you have no idea how angry I was at the both of you and how I hated being YOUR son and to be punished for YOUR indiscretions..over time..I became angrier at you than at Hera..after a while..I began to see Hera as a victim too..that she too was a victim of YOUR selfishness..of YOUR indiscretions..You fooled around while married..being King of the Gods you should have realized the consequences...finished Hercules...

"How dare you talk to your father in such a manner..as a matter of fact if it weren't for my indiscretions..Hercules..YOU would never have been born..fumed Zeus.....

At that precise moment, Athena appeared. She put a soothing hand on both Zeus and her baby brother Hercules and said "Don't forget, Hercules, why you came to Olympus..it's not to rehash the past..it's to bury the hatchet..let go of the past..to start over again with Zeus and Hera..for Evander..please..don't forget Evander, Hercules"

Artemis also appeared and added "You know Hercules, despite everything Zeus has done, you still love Zeus..it's what Aries calls your blind spot..and despite all of Zeus' "efforts" at being a father, you know in your heart, Hercules, that Zeus never stopped loving you..."

Aphrodite not wanting to be left out in any of her older sister' games "Come on bro, do like Sweetcheeks did, forgive and forget..if Sweetcheeks can forgive that rat Skouras, well, you can forgive Zeus..right little bro?

Hercules azure eyes looked into his father's. "Father, I am willing to entertain the idea of forgiving you..for Evander's sake. When you and Hera saved Evander's life, you restored some of my faith in you..I guess for having saved Evander and for Evander's continued happiness I am willing to bury the past..if you are.." Hercules extended his hand for a warrior's handshake. Zeus extended his hand and shook Hercules hand in a warrior's handshake.

"Hercules, son, I know I don't deserve your forgiveness..thank you for forgiving an old man for his indiscretions and his mistakes..I promise you this..because Hera has forgiven me..she will NEVER harass you again..You are free of her curse..from now on..you will be able to marry..have children..and you will never have to fear Hera's wrath again...you see with forgiveness comes peace..peace of heart..peace to mortals and immortals alike..and most of all none of your descendants need fear being struck down by a Greek God again...I give

you my word, Son..from now on I will NOT let you down..exclaimed Zeus.

"You know, Hermes, I can't believe that Hercules forgives me for what I've done. I can't believe how full of hate I was back then. But you know continued Hera.."Forgiveness does bring peace..I've never felt so happy as when I finally forgave Zeus for sleeping around...it's like I love him all over again like when we first created Earth from nothingness..I remember the beauty of creating life on this planet..in those days it was just Zeus and I..against the universe..now I have Zeus back again in my life. I guess the one good thing Aries did in his life was to have Evander. He's the true light of Olympus.

Hermes says "You know Mistress Hera..once Hercules forgives Zeus and you..he will bring Evander to Olympus for the annual dinner. Everyone on Olympus knows that Hercules only forgave Zeus for his past transgressions for Evander's sake."

"To tell you the truth, Hermes, I also forgave Zeus because of Evander. It was Evander who got me out of the Abyss. When Evander was getting me out of the Abyss I could feel his innocence and his love. Evander truly cared about my suffering and my loneliness in the Abyss. Before I regained my memory, I had the privilege of being young again, I learned to love again, Hermes..I learned to love first Evander and then Zeus. We were a family again..and Zeus was SO charming..continued Hera..

When Aries restored my memory with the Fate's history string, I felt all the old hatred come back..what did my hatred cost me..it cost me Evander's life..when I saw Evander's still lifeless body..it was as if my world had come to an end..then Hercules convinced me to forgive Zeus in order to save Evander's life..it was at that moment I forgave both Zeus and I learned to like Hercules...I realized how destructive my hatred had become..do you think Hercules can forgive me? for Deianndra? for killing the ones that HE loved? cried Hera..her green eyes formally so cruel and cold filling with tears of regret.

Before Hera could lift her head, Hermes had momentarily left the room to tell Hercules about his highly UNUSUAL conversation with Hera. When Hera lifted her head, she saw not Hermes..but Hercules standing there. For the first time, his azure eyes were not filled with anger or hatred, only compassion and understanding. Hera thought how much Hercules resembled Zeus in his youth.....

"Hera, I don't know where to start. I want to thank you for saving Evander's life by forgiving Zeus. We both know how his indiscretions have hurt us. We both know the pain that Zeus has bought into both of our lives. You know Hera, at first I blamed you for the deaths of my wife and family..but later I placed all my blame on Zeus. I carried this anger around with me..this anger I had for Zeus..for his indiscretions..for the pain he has caused..but now..Hera..I am ready to let it all go..to bury the past.. and live for the future of Olympus..burying the past is the only way we can bring peace to Olympus..I want you to know I am doing this for Evander..and for all of us..continued Hercules simply.."I forgive you..and most of all I forgive Zeus.."

"Hercules, I do promise you that I will never hurt you..or your

friends and family again. I learned my lesson about the destructiveness of hatred. You will never have to worry about my wrath again..I give you my word. If Discord, Strife or Aries ever give you any trouble, you just send them over to me..remember we all love Evander..I want us to be a family again..to make Olympus a safe and happy place for him...yes, Evander is the future..and so is your compassion, Hercules..Zeus is right in having you raise Evander...now go to Evander..and be happy knowing you never have to fear Hera again...ended Hera. With a wave of her hand, Hera sent Hercules back to Evander and Iolaus.

When Hercules landed back at Evander and Iolaus, he found Evander tickling Iolaus to death. Iolaus' giggle could be heard reverberating around the house. Iolaus was in the helpless position of being tickled with no end in sight. Iolaus thrashed helplessly on the floor while Evander floated in the air tickling his uncle...the moment Hercules appeared Iolaus cried out hoarsely.."Herc, help me..he's tickling me..he won't stop..make him stop..my ribs hurt..Herc..please..as Iolaus giggled helplessly but also painfully as each giggle elicited a stab of pain from Iolaus' ribs..

Hercules gave Evander a stern look and said "Evander, stop it..remember the game..in another shoes..how would you feel if someone tickled you endlessly....stop tickling Uncle Iolaus..I'm sure your Uncle Iolaus has learned his lesson..leave him alone..besides I have something serious to talk to Uncle Iolaus.."

Evander watched Hercules and he felt Hercules' heart to be light and happy despite Hercules severe face and voice tone but he could feel Hercules' disapproval of his tickling game so he stopped using his powers to tickle Iolaus. Immediately Iolaus felt relief. With the tickling gone, Iolaus was able to sit up and take regular breaths again without the painful giggling...

"Thanks Herc.."says Iolaus breathlessly. "How did it go on Olympus? is forgiveness overrated or what?

"Oh..says Evander realizing that Uncle Hercules and Uncle Iolaus needed their privacy so he invents an excuse to exit the room " I hear my mother calling me..more pumpkin pie for me" Evander runs out of the room in a hurry...but not before hugging both Uncles and whispering into Iolaus' ear "I'm sorry I tickled you so hard, I love you Uncle Iolaus..thank you for restoring Hercules' heart..you kept your promise.."

"Well..Iolaus..it was an interesting visit on Olympus..you want to know the most amazing thing about it all..paused Hercules.."You were right..as soon as I saw my father as a human being with frailties..and Hera as the wronged wife..well..alot of my anger dissipated..I couldn't help but feel sorry for Hera...even feel alittle sorry for Zeus..because Zeus really had no idea how to be a good father..I mean the man has no clue..I guess that's why Aries and Apollo turned out the way they did..I'm not saying that I've totally forgotten the past, Iolaus or totally forgotten the pain that Zeus has caused me but..well..I do understand why Zeus acts the way he does..."

"You know Herc..with me the turning point came when I saw my father in the Underworld..I remember all the times he beat me..I remember looking up at him in fear..he seemed to loom so large like a giant

ugly hydra..I felt so small..so scared..I always felt as if I'd disappointed him somehow..but when I saw him in the Underworld waiting to be judged by Hades..HE looked scared..HE looked small..when he explained to me that he was only trying to discipline me..and that's how he had been raised..well for me alot of things fell together..He never met Leandra..his mother..remember Leandra was kidnapped by the Titans when Skouras was only three..so there was no one there to teach my father to be loving or affectionate..once I understood why..I was able to forgive..Herc, it will take time..but someday you'll be able to forgive Zeus..and even forgive Hera..I'm proud of you, Herc..really I am..says Iolaus..his cerulean blue eyes gleaming with pride.

"You know Iolaus..another interesting result of my trip to Olympus was that Zeus promised me that I would never have to worry about Hera's wrath again because she has totally forgiven him..He says that I can now get married and have children and not have to worry about Hera taking revenge or being jealous..he says it's because he and Hera are so much in love....Hercules paused as if to consider his next comment.

"Wow..to be able to marry and have children and not worry about Hera..that's a relief..just think Herc..we could retire and settle down..are you sure Herc? Are you sure Hera won't change her mind? asked a worried Iolaus..

"Well that's what I thought..until Hera herself talked to me. I mean she actually looks pretty..I guess I've only seen her in her witchlike angry mode...She seemed really apologetic..she realized how destructive her hatred has been..because of her love for Evander..she told me that when she held Evander's lifeless body in her hands..she realized that SHE was responsible for his death..she said that when she and Zeus joined forces to revive Evander..she realized that her hate for me was wrong....she really has fallen in love with Zeus again..if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes..I would never have believed it..says Hercules..

"I can't believe you actually talked to Hera..and that she's truly changed..Herc..have you forgiven her too? I mean you know for Deianndra and the children?

"I'm not sure..Iolaus...I mean every time I grieve for Deianndra and the children..I still feel their loss..I still miss them..Iolaus..I still wish that my children were here..I still feel angry at both Hera and Zeus..but I understand them now so much better..I understand Hera's jealousy..I understand Zeus' hesitation..did you totally forgive Skouras? Do you love him unconditionally? Do you forgive Hera for the deaths of Anya and your children?

"Oh Herc..that's a big question..I think it's easier for me to forgive Skouras because I feel sorry for him..but for Hera..for the deaths of Anya and my children..oh Herc..I don't know..that's a tall order..but I guess I know what you mean..I understand Hera's anger at Zeus..but I don't agree at all at how she expressed her anger..does that make any sense Herc? asked Iolaus..."You know Herc..maybe you should think about getting married again..it might change your perspective on everything..now that you no longer have to worry about Hera..what about Aries? Discord? or the other Gods? do you have to worry about them?

"Hera promised me that if Aries or Discord or Daimos ever made trouble for me that she would see to it that they were punished accordingly..I got the impression that Hera will protect me from Aries, Discord or Daimos from now on as her way of making up for the past..and to win Evander's respect and love...I have to say, Iolaus, I was very surprised by Hera..I mean..such a turn around..I never knew she had any decency in her at all..mused Hercules...you know maybe getting married again isn't such a bad idea Iolaus..it would be nice to have children again..and to come home to a family...Hera's turnaround does put a new spin on things!

"With Evander around Herc, do you think there will come a time when the GreekGods will stop interfering with mortals altogether? asked Iolaus.."With Hera no longer hating you anymore..Aries no longer has an ally with whom he can torment you..did you see Aries cry when we made fun of him the other day? Maybe you're right..maybe we both should get married again..it would be nice not having to look over my shoulder and worry if some God will kill my family or not..having a family again would be great! mused Iolaus with a smile.

"I honestly believe that Evander is the future of Olympus. Already Evander has caused Zeus and Hera to fall back in love. He has caused Hera to embrace love and forgive Zeus for all his tresspasses..Evander even caused me to forgive Zeus and to some extent even Hera for the deaths of my wife and children..Evander brings hope..I truly am glad that I made this trip to Olympus.." concluded Hercules. "Everyone loves Evander..they love his innocence..I guess for once dinner with my relatives might actually be fun..it will be fun to see the look of wonder in Evander's eyes as he visits Olympus for the very first time...Iolaus..you are invited you know..wanna come Mr. Guardian of the Light?

"Sure..who am I to turn down free food? as Iolaus thought about the mounds and mounds of food surely decorating an Olympian table. "Just point me towards the food, Herc..I don't care what your relatives say or do..as long as there's food, I'll have fun..." as Iolaus gave Hercules one of his megawatt smiles.

"Iolaus..don't you ever tire of food?" Hercules laughed out loud at the hurt incredulous look on Iolaus' face.

"Never..Herc..Never! laughed Iolaus..joy and mischeviousness glimmering in Iolaus' blue eyes as he looked up at Hercules.

"Ah there you two are..Evander has been asking for you..Hercules, he wants you to tuck him into bed.." says Nemesis.."Evander is so excited about his first dinner on Olympus..he's practically jumping out of bed..I can't get him to sleep.."

"Now Evander, tomorrow is the banquet..now get some sleep okay..I'll tell you a story about me..but only if you promise to close your eyes first..Hercules told Evander about HIS first trip to Olympus "I thought Olympus was so beautiful..white Greek columns everywhere..I was so awed by it all...Zeus' throne was so huge.." Hercules stopped talking as he noticed that Evander had already nodded off to sleep.

Aries watched invisibly at the sleeping form of his son. Pride shone in his brown eyes as he realized how important his son had become to the future of Olympus and how many Gods loved him. He watched

jealously as he saw Hercules tuck HIS son into bed. With extreme sadness and yet extreme pride, Aries invisibly kissed his son on the forehead and whispered "I love you, Evander, you are truly a very special child."

As Aries was about to leave Evander's side, another blue flash of light appeared heralding the arrival of Zeus into Evander's sleeping bedroom. "Hold on Aries..I'm afraid there have been some last minute changes for the banquet" says Zeus

"What do you mean, Father..? asked Aries..his dark brows furrowing threateningly.

"Nemesis has made it quite clear that she doesn't want you to be near Evander. She doesn't want you to be at the banquet, Aries. I agree with Nemesis. It is best that you stay away from Evander and let Hercules raise the child. That is my decision and Hera agrees. ended Zeus suddenly as he disappeared from the room before Aries could make another statement.

Tears of sadness fell from Aries' face as he contemplated the sleeping form of his son knowing that he would not be permitted to see Evander or even talk to Evander. "Someday, son I promise I will get to know you..I just wish I could get to know you today" Overcome with emotions of sadness, a weeping Aries left the bedroom in a flash of blue light and Aries last thought before leaving was "My half-brother, Hercules doesn't know how lucky he is..to have Evander in his life..." as Aries disappeared into the dark night.

Epilogue

"Thanks Uncle Herc..Uncle Iolaus..it was a great banquet..Grandpa Zeus and Grandma Hera were so nice..You know Uncle Herc..I love Grandma Hera very much..she has the nicest green eyes..and Grandpa Zeus let me ride on his lightning bolts..it was such fun! exclaimed Evander. " I loved eating the baked hydra and dragon tooth pie..the food and the ambrosia was great! Grandpa sure knows how to throw a party!"

Evander continued obviously too excited to stop "Aunt Athena is so wise..I mean she had to leave the banquet early in order to take care of Aunt Discord again...Uncle Herc..what did Aunt Athena mean when she told Aunt Discord "you will go to Tartarus if you do that again?"

Before Hercules could respond, Nemesis put a stop to her son's unceasing questions about Olympus or his endless fascination with his godly relatives and their antics "Now, Evander go to your bedroom and put on your pajamas..then we can have storytime and Uncle Hercules and Uncle Iolaus can tell you more stories..now go!" Evander kisses his mother and runs into his bedroom to put on his pajamas.

"I'm sorry Hercules, Iolaus..Evander is still so excited about the banquet. He's fascinated and awed by it all..I'm just glad Aries wasn't there..I just don't want Aries near my son..I told Zeus to keep Aries away from Evander..I'm glad Zeus forbade Aries from coming...it's just that Evander needs his childhood..his goodness..I worry about him, Hercules" says Nemesis...her grey eyes reflecting worry...

"Don't worry Nemesis, as long as Iolaus and I are here..we will help you take care of Evander..he will have all the love he needs from us.." reassured Hercules his blue azure eyes reflecting compassion and warmth.

"Mom! Mom! Aunt Athena is here ! Can she stay and tell me stories! Please Mom! Please! pleaded Evander...

"Alright..you may listen to only ONE story from Aunt Athena..then young man it's time to turn in..You have school tomorrow. Now give Mommy a kiss and now say goodnight to Uncle Hercules and Uncle Iolaus before they go..says Nemesis...

"Okay Mom..goodnight Uncle Hercules..goodnight Uncle Iolaus I love you.." Evander gave both his uncles a big hug as he runs into the bedroom to listen to Aunt Athena tell him stories about Olympus.

"Well, Herc..how did the banquet go for you?" asked Iolaus curiously.."How did it feel to be with Zeus and Hera at the same table as Evander?"

"Well..Iolaus..I guess I've learned a valuable lesson out of all of this" started Hercules his blue eyes furrowing in concentration and deep thought as he continued "Burying the past and forgiving Zeus has been difficult..I've had to learn to see Zeus as an imperfect being..and to love him despite his faults..Aphrodite is right..if horse-faced Hera can love Zeus and forgive him..well I guess so can I..believe me, Iolaus, Zeus has ALOT of faults for me to forgive!"

"You thought it was easy for me to forgive Skouras? added Iolaus sarcastically.."Despite all the abuse he put me right, Herc, I found it extremely rewarding to just let go..and that meant loving him for who he is..it helped me get rid of my anger and my hatred..and it helped me move on with my life..."

"Iolaus, you're right..forgiving Zeus has allowed me to see past my anger..my grief..it allowed me to release my anger and just think of the future..You know Iolaus, Sin is wrong..because I no longer have anger in my heart...I think I can love again..maybe even marry...this whole forgiveness thing..it feels as if I've cleansed my soul.."

Evander snuggled closely to his favorite full-God relative as he tilted his head as if listening to the empty air, his little body trembled with excitement as he breathlessly expressed his happiness to Athena as he felt Hercules'emotions pummeling through his body.."Aunt Athena..whispered Evander.."I think Hercules' heart is healed..I can feel it. he's happy in his soul..Aunt Athena...is that why you came here to see if Uncle Hercules is alright?"

Sitting on the bed, Athena also felt Hercules' change of heart and she felt glad that Hercules was finally able to let go of the anger he had kept buried since Deianndra's death so Athena sat close to Evander and whispered conspiratorily "You are wise beyond your years little Evander. I have felt it too. Hercules forgives Zeus..yes he has been healed..it's all because of you Evander..he forgave Zeus for your sake..Hercules' love for you has allowed him to heal...Evander, you are truly a wonder..."Athena gave Evander an affectionate hug "I

love you, little Evander..now my angel..I must be going..sleep well"

"I know, Aunt Athena..I know how much Uncle Hercules loves me and I love you all" Evander smiled as he closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep.."

"You know Herc, ..why don't we check out the festival in Corinth..we can visit Iphicles.. I hear he has a new wife..then we can swing by Jason at the Academy? What do yo say? urged Iolaus...

"Sure Iolaus..are you sure you just don't want to go fishing?" asked Hercules who looked and felt younger than he had in years...Forgiving Zeus had given Hercules a new lease on life..and a endless source of "youthful" energy he hadn't felt in years. Hercules had never realized how draining anger and grief could be on the human soul...without thinking he gave Iolaus a healthy slap on the back...

"Nah..we can go fishing anytime..think of all the girls Herc..the free food..or we can judge a beauty contest like we did last year..it sure was fun..and who knows...you might meet your new wife at Corinth..come on! as Iolaus bounced out of the house ready to hit the road. Iolaus thought it is about time that Hercules let go of the past and moved on with his life. He looks like he's eighteen again. Yes, this will be a fun trip to Corinth!

End
file.